



Stanford in the Vale

Neighbourhood Plan

Analysis and commentary on the 1996 Village Appraisal in support of the SITV Neighbourhood Plan.

Roger Griffin

Richard Harrison

Chris Marshall

Hadyn Wood

Explanation – the approach taken

- The VA is seen as a key benchmark and input to the current NP.
- We have used it to provide useful insights and to correlate these with more recent inputs (e.g. Housing Survey).
- We concentrated mostly on the VA areas that are most strongly linked to the Built Environment and Land Use (which is the *raison d'être* for the NP).
- In order to provide a degree of rigour 2 teams separately analysed the VA conclusions and extracted key information.
- The outputs from these 2 teams were then compared and aligned.
- The result is a set of complementary outputs captured on the following slides:
 - a summary of VA conclusions
 - a SWOT analysis
 - a commentary on key insights gleaned from the VA and their relevance in the current NP context,
 - analysis of what has changed since 1996 (i.e. what VA conclusions still seem to be valid).
- It is hoped that, used in conclusion with other key inputs, this will help move us forward quickly during the NP scoping phase.

Summary of analysis of VA and what has changed since

Main conclusions of relevance to the Built Environment and Land Use.

Overall it is clear that not much of importance has changed and critically the views on housing development would appear to have remained very constant (this is very powerful information for the NP)

Likelihood attitudes have changed since VA

Survey and Data Processing: We can learn useful lessons for how to conduct any NP work, survey or consultation. High workload of data processing associated with consultations and surveys (use of existing online survey tools today would massively reduce cost, admin and processing workload for NP consultation).

Very low

Housing / Development: Comparing the VA with more recent information (particularly the Housing Survey) the over-riding message is one of long-term consistency in the views of the majority of SITV residents with respect to Housing development / expansion. While some refresh of views may be useful it is highly unlikely to change the main conclusions:

Low

- People want the village to keep a village feel and its rural charms and sense of community and central to this is retention of the key assets in the village Conservation Areas.
- Limited but tightly controlled Housing development is acceptable to most but concerns over traffic and parking persist. Larger developments are opposed by the large majority of residents. The main perceived demand in any new smaller housing development is for small and medium-sized homes of between 2-4 bedrooms with more provision such as bungalows to cater for the aging population.
- Some expansion of light commercial / business enterprise is welcome to improve local jobs and reduce commuting.

Education: The view of educational demands and the needs (and trends) may need more recent data. Large development would overwhelm existing facilities but if more modest is there clear evidence that demand would grow, decline or remain static?

Possible – needs data.

History and Business: Shops, pubs and “agro-based” jobs have been in long-term decline (getting them back likely to be a very difficult challenge and may not be a productive use of effort / resources).

Very low

Employment: Patterns of employment have changed and will continue to do so. Refreshing the survey may have merit but we have to be clear what it would prove and also consider the skewing effect that the recent recession may have on the current picture and trends. It is clear that the retired (aging) population of SITV was quite large and is only likely to have grown in the interim. Up to date demographic figures would help shape our understanding of future demands on the Built Environment and services.

Possible but unlikely to be highly significant

Environment: Many environmental issues identified in the VA may or may not have improved and it would be beneficial if those in the know could summarise changes in the intervening years and provide a “gap” analysis of where we are and where the main shortfalls still lie. It would appear there have been small improvements but nothing major.

Low

Sports & Leisure facilities: it is unlikely the picture presented has changed significantly. What is desired, what can or should be provided and what would actually get used are likely to be quite different things in reality.

Very low

Transport: the picture is dominated by a high percentage of car ownership and use. This is only likely to have increased and has implications in terms of making adequate provision for the parking of vehicles in the built environment and for management / safety concerns with increase of traffic / dwellings. The demand for cycling and walking provision in and around the built environment is likely to have stayed similar. There is an ongoing challenge to ensure that infrastructure improvement by developers is adequate.

Low

VA Introduction

- Clearly the way the VA work was structured into working parties can provide useful comparison for our NP work.
- There is an indication that the greater majority of SITV folks like the village and on the whole will stay here for many years.
- Most want it not to change too radically but to remain a village with its rural charm.
- They don't want it to become an impersonal town with little character (as echoed at Village Hall meeting for NP kick off and since)
- People want the key assets (church, greens, pub, supermarket, etc.) and the centre Conservation Area retained.

useful introductory material. For example, the last question, question 86, asked people to state what they felt was the greatest asset of our Village. Surprisingly, only about 100 people offered an answer to this question. The most common answers were "the community spirit", "the people", "the mix of people", "the friendly atmosphere", "the rural charm", "the peace and quiet". Many people said that its greatest asset is that it is a village. Several expressed concern that it should stay that way. To quote one person, "it is beautiful at the moment, let's keep it that way". Some people highlighted specific places and buildings as being the greatest asset, such as the church, the greens - even the pubs and the supermarket! One or two highlighted the surrounding countryside, a couple of people stated that the Village's mix of old and new was a great asset, and, finally, a few people mentioned the accessibility of major routes from the Village. So, we had quite a large range of answers. It's nice to know that there are so many good reasons to live in Stanford.

History

- Nothing directly relevant to built environment but population and household growth figures (year on year) may provide a useful historical context and should ideally be projected into the current year. It is clear that the pace of change has accelerated over recent decades and will probably continue to do so.
- The historical context and recorded changes to local businesses over time are a useful reminder that predicting trends is not simple but one theme is clear: agriculturally based businesses have declined and often given way to housing development and the number of shops/pubs has seen a very significant fall over recent decades (with similar if more modest change of use to housing).
- There is a fair amount of History to the Village which might be used to Protect certain areas and Properties that may not necessarily warrant Listing.

Computer

- Useful lessons to be learned from the VA about the number, style, piloting and presentation of questions for our NP consultation process and about checking data integrity and avoiding bias.
- Data analysis a huge task (use of existing online survey tools today would massively reduce the cost, admin and processing workload for NP consultation so we should be able to find ways to go “paperless” without disenfranchising any residents).

Development

- In common with recent Housing Survey and NP kick-off meet:
 - Majority of respondents supported limited and controlled development but with tight restrictions and wanted relatively low caps on the numbers of new houses.
 - Main objection to development was loss of rural village character with mentions also about safety on roads and loss of community spirit.
- Of those accepting there should be new housing there was a split in preference for location of new housing between edge of village vs in-fill (can we infer from that that each potential site will have to be assessed on its own merits and likely impacts and this is probably little different to how people would answer today?). We should note in the Housing Survey that small / in-fill schemes was the preference of the majority.
- Most people were willing to accept expansion in small business or light industry and keeping such enterprises close to the village was the majority preference (providing local employment and reducing commuting). It is unlikely this view has significantly changed.

In order to survive and thrive, a village needs to develop and change, but in such a way as to keep and nurture its character. Therefore inhabitants who care about their village should take an active interest in planning and development, so that Stanford in the Vale will be a place in which the residents will be able to enjoy the type of life they would like to maintain.

Conclusions. On the whole, people would accept some housing and commercial development, with the proviso that it would be carefully monitored in order to retain a village atmosphere. The community spirit would ensure the continuance of village life: and those who would like to stay in Stanford - both to live and work - would be able to do so. Some of these areas are covered by environment and employment. Jobs mean that a community can continue to thrive; work locally means less pollution from transport emissions and fuel consumption; and sufficient homes and facilities mean that families can stay in a stable and familiar situation.

SWOT

Development

Strengths

- I. Present balance between preservation/conservation of the village environment and development in Stanford.
- II. The highest percentage of those giving a view felt that the present rate is about right, which could imply some amount of confidence in the ability of the village to develop and absorb such growth into village life.

Weaknesses

- I. Roughly equal numbers would accept edge of village housing, infilling, no extra housing development, or gave no answer. The village appears to be split four ways on this question. Planners please note.

Opportunities

- I. It seems that in all categories that expressed a view it was felt that there could be limited development, while keeping restrictions tight was the next most popular view. Thus it seems that controlled development would be acceptable to the majority.
- II. However, the highest category was for an increase of up to 50 houses, closely followed by no increase. This would tie in with the wish for limited development already mentioned. The highest response came from the older residents (31 and older) which seems to point to people wanting to stay in Stanford, and hoping for family to do so as well.
- III. Most people would seem to be willing to accept small businesses or light industry: the third highest number gave no view on this. The highest percentage of those within the working age would accept commercial development.
- IV. Highest number who answered this question think commercial development should be near the village, providing opportunities for local work.

Threats

- I. Uncontrolled development arising from opening of "floodgates".
- II. Fear that the rural character of the village would be lost.
- III. Fears of safety being adversely affected by the increase in traffic
- IV. Worries about losing community spirit.

Education

- It would be important to understand what the school demographic/numbers trends are likely to be if there is only organic, evolutionary change in SITV over next 10 years.
- The built environment may still face challenges in terms of providing for after school and evening class facilities that can be accessed locally without transport – needs to be checked or corroborated from more recent data if any exists.
- There is a real concern that uncontrolled development will overwhelm existing capacity and facilities (which cannot expand at the current site).

There are two main conclusions which may be drawn from this survey. Primarily, it seems apparent from question 20 that one of the actions forthcoming from the Village Appraisal should be the further investigation of an after-school playscheme. Secondly, transport issues clearly have an adverse effect on the participation of the under-sixteen's in out of school/after school clubs. This may be an area which requires further study, in co-operation with school authorities.

SWOT

Education

Strengths

- I. None identified.

Weaknesses

- I. Inability of existing and recently introduced education facilities to cope with an influx of pupils following uncontrolled development.

Opportunities

- I. None identified.

Threats

- I. Overwhelming of existing facilities by uncontrolled demand.
- II. Lack of capability (no room at current locations or suitable alternative sites) of expansion for existing facilities.

Employment

- The proportion of retired folks in SITV was quite high. This is only likely to have increased in the intervening years and needs to be addressed in the future built environment.
- Transport, travel distance to jobs, lack of skills and Childcare limitations were cited as main factors in unemployment for those without jobs. This has probably changed little.
- We can probably assume the percentage split across type of jobs being done by local residents has changed in line with national trends. E.g. Technical and Manual have probably stayed the same or declined while Service and Creative have increased a bit. However the recent recession will have undoubtedly muddied the picture over recent years and the current situation may not be representative of what will unfold now that the economy appears to be recovering.

A short summary of the conclusions from the analysis of the employment data is given below:

- Some 57% of respondents are in employment, 3% are unemployed, i.e. 30 people (18 female, 12 male). In addition, 16 people are full time carers, 146 are wholly retired, 13 are sick or disabled, 75 are in full time education, 2 are in Government training schemes and 23 people are not looking for work. Some 26 indicated that they do voluntary work.
- The reasons for unemployment were varied. The biggest problems were transport (26 people) and the lack of opportunities within travelling distance (24 people). No skill or training was a problem for 7 people and 11 people indicated that lack of childcare prevented employment.
- The distribution of types of work and the location of work places were widely spread. Although 176 people work in the Village (at home or elsewhere in the Village), large numbers travel to Wantage, Faringdon, Abingdon, Swindon, Oxford, Didcot/Harwell and other destinations both under and over 30 miles distant.
- There is a significant demand for local advertising of job opportunities.

SWOT

Employment

Strengths

Weaknesses

I. Greater employment opportunities with commercial development.

I. Possible influx of persons seeking local employment.

Opportunities

Threats

I. Greater employment opportunities with commercial development.

I. Possible influx of persons needing local employment leading to greater unemployment and associated problems in the village.

Environment (*and infrastructure*)

- Protection and enhancement of the environment were important to residents then and no doubt remain so.
- Parking problems on greens and verges was an issue and remains one.
- Lack of street lighting in key areas was an issue and remains one (has even one light been added in response to the VA?).
- There was demand for more bins and benches and to some extent this may remain (but need to understand what has changed in the interim years as bins have certainly been added).
- Many residents knew nothing of the Lagoon conservation site and this has probably not changed. Many wanted better access to it and facilities to enhance enjoyment of it. Has anything really happened to improve this at all?
- Footpaths are seen as important by the overall majority (unlikely to have changed) and access to and condition of footpaths was a concern to many. Much has been done to improve things in the intervening years but quite a bit more remains to be done and some activity to identify, prioritise and action further improvement of the footpaths and cycle route options around SITV is relevant (maybe it is in progress?).
- Concerns over traffic noise, volume and speed are unlikely to have receded in the intervening years.

Conclusions

An overwhelming response from villagers confirmed the importance of footpaths/bridleways for recreation and health, outstripping all other responses in the environmental section of the questionnaire. This awareness also showed concern over the care and maintenance of paths/bridleways. When the response to the landfill area is considered, a clear mandate exists for the creation and extension of access to this site via a safe and clearly designated route. Despite the lack of knowledge of the landfill site by a considerable number of villagers the response from the Appraisal is extremely encouraging from an environmental viewpoint. Distribution of this section of the Appraisal report to the O.C.C., English Nature and other environmental groups may help in gaining financial assistance for securing, creating and maintaining footpaths/bridleways, tree and hedgerow planting and for heightening awareness of environmental issues.

Street lighting and litter bins are confirmed as requirements that could be addressed directly. Provision of additional litter bins would assist with the major concern over tidiness and litter. The Appraisal, in this respect, spotlights the positioning of bins. It is clear that a programme to extend street lighting must be given attention. Again, prioritisation for maximising benefit is available from the information provided.

Finally, dog fouling is clearly viewed as a major concern by the majority of responses. Hopes are pinned on the legislative proposals to aid resolving this perennial problem. Regularly raising this issue in newsletters and via notices may help. Reporting offenders to the District Council or Parish Council by members of the public could help. In any case, the Appraisal has shown an extremely significant number of people objecting to dog faeces on footpaths and play areas and the issue must be taken further.

SWOT

Environment

Strengths

- I. None identified.

Weaknesses

- I. The protection of greens and the preservation of older buildings/walls are clearly popular options, and a substantial, though lesser, vote was received for the planting of trees, nature conservation in the Village and hedgerow reviving.
- II. Poor street lighting in some areas.

Opportunities

- I. Improvement to footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes for recreation and health.
- II. A clearly designated safe route to the landfill site and access to the lagoon area.

Threats

- I. Greater pressure on surrounding green areas.
- II. "General tidying and maintenance" is clearly an important issue to the majority of Villagers.
- III. Enhanced litter.
- IV. "Suburbanisation of the Village resulting in shorn verges and lack of wild flowers, grasses etc."
- V. Threat to an overwhelming response from villagers in terms confirmed the importance of footpaths/bridleways for recreation and health, outstripping all other responses in the environmental section of the questionnaire. This awareness also showed concern over the care and maintenance of paths/bridleways. When the response to the landfill area is considered, a clear mandate exists for the creation and extension of access to this site via a safe and clearly designated route.

Housing

- Overwhelming conclusion is that the majority see the need for and support limited development but restrictions should be tight.
- The major reasons for limiting development are to protect rural character of the village and the sense of community and concerns over traffic/parking.
- There is very little support for larger development.
- If there is development most would seem to favour infill and “edge of village” sites.
- A lot was “read into” the stats on moving intentions and house sizes. In assessing demand today we should be cautious in making too many assumptions especially since time has passed, aspirations and demographics have shifted and there have been some turbulent economic conditions in recent years. It is reasonably safe though to state that, somewhat predictably, the largest demand for housing was (and seems to remain in the more recent Housing Survey) small to medium sized (between 2-4 bed). This seems to hold true whether folks are upsizing, downsizing or just moving.
 - Increased supply of 4 bed houses was seen as important to allow families to grow and yet stay in the village while freeing up small homes which would satisfy ongoing demand for those without the need for any significant additions to small dwellings. It is likely that developments in the intervening years did actually address this perceived shortfall in 4 bed houses.
 - A perceived short-fall of bungalows is unlikely to have been corrected in the intervening years when one considers the rise of the aging population and the economics of housebuilding which has led to a significant decline in the numbers of new bungalows being built.

SWOT

Housing

Strengths

- I. Providing homes for existing residents. If these people have to move from the Village, even if they want to stay, because the housing they require is not available, it will mean that the character of the Village will change rapidly.
- II. So, from the yes-no responses, in general, we can state that roughly 50% of those moving will move within the Village

Weaknesses

- I. The opinions are rather mixed, with similar numbers voting for infilling, building on the edge of the Village, and no development at all (in line with the "no increase" response to question 49).

Opportunities

- I. The clear message is "develop with caution": Note that a majority, 58.4%, said that we need more homes or should consider limited development. However, with one third of the Village asking for restrictions to be tight, any developments should be carefully considered.
- II. May be able to influence type of houses constructed.

Threats

- I. The biggest concerns are the increase of traffic and the loss of the rural character of the Village.
- II. A clear majority of 58.4% were in favour of some development, though it is clear that a large development is not desired by many. Threat of loss of control of such projects.

Health and Social Services

Health and Social Services have a weaker relationship with the Built Environment and the picture painted is likely to have changed in some details in the intervening years though it is fair to say that the overall conclusions that provision in the area is generally adequate probably still holds true just as it is likely that access to services remains a challenge for some sections of our community particularly the more elderly.

SWOT

Health & Social Services

Strengths

- I. None identified.

Weaknesses

- I. No access to NHS medical, dental or dispensary services in the village. Villagers wishing to see a doctor need to travel to one of three places as only one doctor, from Faringdon, runs a surgery in Stanford (once a week). Is this still true?
- II. Volunteer drivers run a car service taking patients to Oxford and other hospitals.

Opportunities

- I. May increase the probability of mains gas provision to all the village.

Threats

- I. There is no obvious complaint about a particular service, but with an ageing population, the percentage of people finding it hard to reach the services they require is very likely to increase.
- II. If the policy behind the future development of the village is to provide housing, employment and quality of life for a full range of ages, the provision of more services of all kinds should be borne in mind during planning. It is to be hoped that the information in this section will help in this process.
- III. Overloading of existing volunteer services.

7 – Sports & Leisure.

- There is desire and support for more facilities and improvements but what is less clear is whether the requirements are strong enough to justify major investments and to support/maintain facilities once provided. Coupled to this, general provision in the wider area is largely seen as adequate.
- Although there has been some progress in the intervening years (e.g. playground improvement, footpath improvements around the perimeter of the village) it is unlikely the overall picture of views presented with respect to Sports and Leisure has changed much since no major, new dedicated sports or leisure facilities have been added to the village.

SWOT

Sports and Leisure

Strengths

- I. None identified.

Weaknesses

- I. Inadequate local leisure facilities.

Opportunities

- I. None identified in the current financial climate.

Threats

- I. Existing leisure facilities are already under pressure and could easily be totally overwhelmed.
- II. Risk of increased crime rate due to the possibility of many more bored teenagers.
- III. Again the lack of places to go or things to do in the village is compounded by the poor public transport available to get to other places. Poor provision for this age group almost inevitably leads to other related community problems and so has wider consequences which need to be addressed.

SWOT

Transport

Strengths

- I. None identified.

Weaknesses

- I. Inadequate infrastructure planning by developers.

Opportunities

- I. Possibility for provision of public transport, given potential increase of customers.

Threats

- I. Concern over lack of existing public transport and its inadequate provision with development.